The first mention of it occurs shortly after the discovery of the New World, when Cortez and his companions, between the years 1521 and 1540, employed it in the construction of the ships which they built for prosecuting their voyages of discovery, after their conquest of Mexico.—*See the Letters of Cortez to the Emperor Charles V.*

In 1597, it was used in the repairs of Sir Walter Raleigh's ships, in the West Indies; and Capt. Dampier, in one of his voyages, in 1681, speaking of mahogany, or, as it was then called, cedrela, or cedar, says, 'it was concluded to go with all our ships to St. Andreas, near the Isle of Providence, and besides, at this island, we might build canoes, it being plentifully stored with large cedars; and for this reason, the Jamaica men come hither frequently to build sloops,—cedar being very fit for building. We reckon the pereagos and canoes, which are built of cedar, the best of any.'

Mahogany was first imported into England in its unmanufactured state, in 1724, and it will, perhaps, be interesting to mention the account of its introduction given in Lunan's 'Hortus Jamaicensus.' A few planks, it is related, were sent to Dr. Gibbons, of London, by a brother, who was a West India captain. The doctor was erecting a house in King-street, Covent Garden, and gave the planks to the workmen, who rejected them as being too hard. The doctor's cabinet-maker, named Wollaston, was then employed to make a candle-box of them, but as he was sawing up the planks, he also complained of the hardness of the timber; but when the candle-box was finished, it outshone in beauty all the doctor's other furniture, and became an object of curiosity and exhibition. The wood was then taken into favour. Dr. Gibbons had a bureau made of it, and the Duchess of Buckingham another; and the despised mahogany now became an article of luxury, and at the same time raised the fortune of the cabinet-maker by whom it had at first been so little regarded."

The Family Almanack and Educational Register for 1851. J. H. Parker, 377, Strand.

THE peculiarity and at the same time the value of this almanack, consists in its giving a list of the foundation and grammar schools in England and Wales, with an account of the scholarships and exhibitions attached to them. It is a noble list, filling 150 pages, certainly the most complete yet published, and will be found valuable in pointing out to parents and others where education may best be obtained for their children, according to their locality.

There are some omissions, of course, which may be supplied next year. Amongst the proprietary schools, for example, we do not find either the Western Grammar School, at Brompton, or the Kensington Grammar School, both of good standing.

Horæ Vacivæ: a Thought-Book of the Wise Spirits of all Ages and all Countries, fit for all Men and all Hours: collected, arranged, and edited by JAMES ELMES, Author of "Memoirs of Sir C. Wren," &c. Longman and Co., 1851.

THE history of this little compilation is rather a sad one, as some of our readers may readily anticipate. The editor of it, having been deprived of sight for more than four years, by the assistance of an affectionate daughter had previously published his brief "History of Architecture in Great Britain," but, lately, a slight return of vision in one eye, enabled him, with the aid of a magnifying glass, to read, at short intervals, various bold types in English black letter, German, and Hebrew, as well as the Roman of our early folios, and, by habit, to make extracts that he sometimes could not read himself. The result has been the present little pocket companion, which the publishers have appropriately done up somewhat in the olden style, and in a bold type, which, we hope, the afflicted editor will himself have the satisfaction of being able to peruse: for this is a book not for mere hasty perusal and done with, but for frequent recurrence to, as a solace and companion, especially in affliction, or where long or continuous reading cannot be enjoyed.

Besides the works already named, Mr. Elmes is the author of "Lectures on Architecture," "Architectural Jurisprudence," "Dictionary of Fine Arts," &c., and editor of "Sir William Jones's Discourses," "Pearls of Great Price," &c.

Miscellanea.

THE FIRE AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS.—In reply to some questions by Mr. Lawless in the Commons the other day, Lord Seymour said, that the origin of the fire was still uncertain; that besides low-pressure tanks, there were four high-pressure service tanks already supplied to the premises, but that the supply of water to them was not in order on the recent occurrence of the fire. Each item of his lordship's intimations was received with laughter, every successive peal louder than its predecessor: a friend who was present complains that he did not get a share of the fun, as he could not see or hear anything capable of tickling the fancy at all in the matter, unless it were the laughter itself. The turncocks, spite of their presumed neglect of duty, must have felt honoured by being found worthy of ministering so much, even as laughing-stocks, to the amusement of the collective wisdom of the nation. Mr. Barry, his lordship added, thought it might be advisable to have reservoirs of water at a distance, or more tanks in the building, for further security in case of any being out of order for the future.

ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY OF ARCHDEACONRY OF NORTHAMPTON.—At a committee-meeting held on Monday in last week, Hon. and Rev. P. A. Irby in the chair, several new members were elected, and it was announced that the list of architects and church artificers employed by members of the society would shortly be circulated. The following societies, in addition to those previously in union, were received into union with the society, for interchange of reports, correspondence, &c.:—The Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society, the Lichfield Architectural Society, the Bristol and West of England Architectural Society, St. Patrick's Society for the study of Ecclesiology, the Durham Architectural Society, the Warwickshire Archæological Society, the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society, the Cambridge Architectural Society, the Bury and West Suffolk Archæological Institute, and the Sussex Archæological Society. The report of the sub-committee on the Wellingborough Church plans was read, and the plans exhibited. They embrace the entire re-seating of the chancel and chancel aisles, in oak. The plans are by Mr. Law; and Messrs. Cooper, of Derby, have contracted for the woodwork. Plans by Mr. Law for a new school at East Haddon, about to be built by H. B. Sawbridge, Esq., were submitted to the committee, to be reported on. The plans for the schools now being erected at Little Brington, by Mr. Hardwick, jun., for Earl Spencer, were exhibited. The great loss the society has met with by the death of Lord Northampton was most generally and deeply expressed.

EXPIRY OF METROPOLITAN SEWERS COMMISSION.—A deputation from the various metropolitan parishes waited on the Home Secretary on Saturday last, for the purpose of laying before him certain statements in reference to the mismanagement of the present Metropolitan Sewers Commission, and the necessity, now that the term of office of that commission is near expiring, that any new measure introduced to Parliament upon the subject should be founded on the basis of the representative principle, and no other. Lord Dudley Stuart and Sir Benjamin Hall were with the deputation. Mr. Nicholay having addressed the Secretary at some length, Mr. Toulmin Smith concluded a few remarks by submitting the heads of the bill they proposed to carry out the objects sought. The Secretary, Sir G. Grey, said, so far as the commission was concerned, the appointment was merely nominal in his hands, but with regard to the auditor it was a different thing. For that appointment he was quite responsible, and he would tell them how he made it. He sent down to the Board of Audit, and asked them to recommend a gentleman who would be suitable to the office. They did so, and he appointed the gentleman recommended. The Government were in no way to blame that the various boroughs of the metropolis have not municipal rights. The fault rested entirely in the apathy of the inhabitants themselves in not applying for a charter of incorporation. Mr. Healey, from St. Pancras, intimated to Sir George that if he did not bring forward such a bill as that proposed, they had given instructions to the metropolitan members to bring in such a bill. The reply was that of course that will be at the discretion of the members.

INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.—On the 4th inst., Mr. William Cubitt, president, in the chair, the paper read was "An Inquiry into the Nature of Patent Law Protection, with a view to the better Appreciation and Security of the Rights of Inventors," by Mr. A. V. Newton. The policy of granting any patents at all was discussed, with the view of ascertaining whether, under certain circumstances, such protection to inventors had not proved detrimental to the interests of the manufacturers; and in considering this point, it was necessary to examine the relation of inventions to other creations of the mind,—as literary and artistic productions, whose right to protection had been universally admitted. If, then, it was argued, a literary composition, a picture, a statue, a decoration, or an invention, be equally the production of the exertion of human intellect, all must be equally entitled to protection. The Copyright Act had secured to the literary man, the artist, and the designer the benefits resulting from their mental labours, and the Patent Law should be rendered so simple as to afford similar protection to the *bona fide* inventor.

PROPOSED NEW HOSPITAL AT BRISTOL.—The spirited citizens of Bristol are busy in promoting the erection and endowment of an additional hospital. At a meeting of influential inhabitants, held on 28th ult., it was unanimously resolved to take immediate steps to complete a subscription of 10,000*l.* *at least*, so as to secure the sum of 5,000*l.*, munificently offered by Mr. Joseph Eaton on condition of 10,000*l.* being otherwise raised. Of this latter sum upwards of 8,000*l.* are already announced, and it is expected that within a week the whole sum will be subscribed. A working men's society has been formed to assist the building committee of the General Hospital, by raising a fund for the erection of a casualty ward. These are noble objects, and are being as nobly carried out.

THE ROYAL INSTITUTION, ALBEMARLE-STREET.—The attractive evening lectures at this popular institution have been resumed. Professor Faraday's important magnetic discoveries formed the subject of the first lecture, which was an animated one in every sense of the term, as the subject of it was that *vital* element oxygen, which even the ancient chemists can be proved to have recognised as "the *soul* of the world." This element Dr. Faraday has discovered to be a sort of aerial iron, in so far as regards magnetism amongst the gaseous diamagnets. The next lecture was one by Professor Brande, "On Peat and its Products," a subject in which we have more than once manifested our interest. Professor Owen next delivered a lecture "On Metamorphosis and Metagenesis." The audiences at the Royal Institution are as crowded and respectable as heretofore.

THE FIRE ANNIHILATER.—Long ago, while admitting the merits of this invention, we took repeated occasion to complain, that while demonstrations were ever and anon being made of its capabilities, none of the machines were to be had, and the patent was virtually useless; so that we got tired of noticing it. We are glad to observe, however, that a company has at length been formed, and we doubt not that in cases where it can be early brought to bear with effect, it will be found to be a valuable means of security.

For Info on OCR and PDF Compression go to ThePaperlessOffice.org